

Entrepreneur SUCCESS STORY Lorna Perks



LORNALOU LTD IS A COMPANY WHICH OFFERS A NUMBER OF INNOVATIVE PRODUCTS INCLUDING SMATTA®, A WATERTIGHT COLLAPSIBLE FOOD CONTAINER AND HER AWARD WINNING PILLPOD, AN INTELLIGENT PILL DISPENSER FOR MANAGING MULTIPLE MEDICATIONS.

MOTIVATION

- ▼ To work with and learn from someone who had 'been there and done it'
- ▼ To establish LornaLou as a company which provides innovative products
- ▼ To take the necessary decisions to achieve growth

ACTION

- ▼ Participated and completed the 1-year Mowgli Mentoring Experience (MME) program
- ▼ Continues the mentoring relationship with her Mowgli Mentor, Jon Penn



ACHIEVEMENT

- ▼ Tangible improvements in business growth/maturity: winning of an award which provided substantial cash injection, patenting of product and establishment of plan to take the business forward
- ▼ Increased confidence in business acumen and decision-making



LORNA PERKS

Lornalou Ltd, UK

Lorna Perks is a Bristol-based inventor and entrepreneur. Her products are varied, including a watertight collapsible food container and Smatta®, a children's tidy mat. It was another product however, which pushed her and her business, LornaLou Ltd into the limelight, when she recently won £200,000 worth of business support in the Orange Different Business Competition. She came up with Pillpod when recovering from breast cancer and on chemotherapy. Her medication included several boxes of pills, injections to be taken to her GP to be administered and a mouthwash to prevent ulcers. All the pillboxes looked the same, and all the pills were white. She found the medication over-load difficult to coordinate, particularly at a time when she was feeling unwell and suffering from related stresses.

She also had a lot of time to think, and came up with a solution to this problem; and one that stems from a genuine understanding of the issues concerned. Pillpod is an intelligent pill dispenser for managing multiple medications. The Pillpod software system integrates pharmacies, GPs and hospitals with the patients' individual treatment plan, via a pre-programmed handheld electronic device connected to the pill dispenser.

This ensures patients follow their course of treatments correctly, safely and on time.

Lorna is a member of the Mowgli Family; a mentee on the Mowgli Foundation's most recent Mowgli Mentoring Experience (MME) programme in the Bristol area, which started in March 2012. She is being mentored by a serial entrepreneur, Jon Penn and remembers the matching event she attended in March very fondly: "Jon and I really got to know each other and understand each other's personalities... it was very intense, particularly when we discussed our own timelines... we got to know each other, 'warts and all.'"

The MME laid the foundations for a relationship that has had a fantastic first few months. "It was the perfect match. Jon is delightful, supportive and fun. He has been there for me every time I have called. I am learning so much from him and he makes me want to succeed even more. He gives me a verbal push - helping with prioritisation and giving me confidence in decision making."

Lorna did extremely well to be shortlisted when 10 were selected from around 150 business ideas across the UK. Each shortlisted applicant was asked to record a short video (see Lorna's below) and 3 finalists were chosen in a public vote. Lorna was asked to go to London to deliver a nerve-wracking pitch to a judging panel which included Trevor Baylis who is famous for inventing the wind-up radio. Winning the competition is incredible news for Lorna, and means she can now proceed with the patenting and production of her prototypes and accelerate the development of a product

that has a huge potential to make a genuine difference to many people's lives.

Jon doesn't accept any credit for Lorna's success in the competition, but has nonetheless been extremely supportive. "Jon's been great," she says. "He's offered to help in any way he can, and went through my application and recommended some additions and changes."

"I am learning so much from [my mentor] and he makes me want to succeed even more. He gives me a verbal push – helping me with prioritisation and giving me confidence in decision-making"

Where does Lorna see the business in five years' time? "I expect the product will be global, used by people all over the world. It's the answer to a serious problem and there's no reason it shouldn't be used globally." Winning this award won't cause her to focus all her energies on the Pillpod, or to take her business down an exclusively medical route, however.

She's proud of the variety of products she offers. "All of my designs are diverse, and they provide answers to varied problems. They appeal to different markets and I intend to keep it that way."

So what advice would Lorna give to others in her position? "Take some risks. You never know unless you try it. It goes to show what a normal person can achieve if they go for things- I'm a single mum, with no qualifications. If I can do it, anyone can!"

Lorna already has the idea for her next invention and she will be working on this as soon as Pillpod is established and she has the time to focus on something new. We can't wait to hear about it!

Video - http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=NO9clMTV-w

